

WHEN PATLATCHES ARE OBSERVED.

By JAMES DEANS.

Some time ago I sent you the first half of this paper on the patlatches of our aborigines; to-day I send you the other half. There was another sort of patlatch, which I shall now explain. It has been from remote ages the custom of our aborigines, at least of those living near the northern coasts, to at first give their children filthy names, which they could not be otherwise than ashamed of in riper years, and endeavor by all means to obtain a better one.

This could be got in the following manner: A certain amount of goods had to be given to the chief and to the tribe as a patlatch, for which he or she obtained, not only a better name, but also a higher rank amongst their people. Along with the new name and rank was a dance for the occasion, and was the principal one that night, because it belonged to the new name and rank into which the party was initiated. The means to obtain this had to be acquired by their own exertion, industry and bravery. A person who had some push about him soon got ahead and was respected by the whole village, while a lazy, shiftless person got neither name nor rank, and was looked upon as little better than a slave. Girls, too, at the age of puberty, had to give a patlatch, at which time she gave away the savings of years; that is, she had been saving up for years in anticipation of living to see that day. With the first appearance of her womanhood she was shut up in a small room, which she was not allowed by any means to leave for one month. Her food was ever passed into her room. When again at liberty she called together the villagers, and to them gave away all she had of personal property. In return she got a better name and a higher social position in the tribe, and at the same time had a hole punched in her lower lip, preparatory to wearing a lip piece or labret. These labrets, by the social usages of these people, had to be exchanged for bigger ones every time she made a patlatch, until, in very old women, their faces looked hideous. The Hidery women's greatest ambition was to be like Cal-Cate-jude, the typical woman of the northern tribes, especially of the Hidery. The girls' room was generally a corner of the house partitioned off by blankets or calico. On the front of her room was hung one of her blankets with the crest sewed on it in beads, or with colored thread. The name given by the Hidery to this ceremony is "Lull." When her lull is over, and she is giving her patlatch, they have the dance which belongs to her crest, and so ends her lull.

As soon as young men or women were able to save enough they had themselves tattooed — the men on their breasts, arms and legs, the women on their legs, and I think, their shoulders only.

For each part of the body that was tattooed they had to give a patlatch of ten blankets, or fifty blankets for legs, arms and breast, or a money value of, at least, \$250. The figures tattooed on their bodies showed the crest, gens and social rank of the party, represented by animals, birds, fishes, sun, moon, and thunder bird. If the party tattooed belonged to the raven phratry or brotherhood, he or she could only use the figures belonging to that phratry. The same may also be said of the Eagle phratry.

I here speak of the Hidery people of Queen Charlotte's Islands and southern Alaska. These later sort of patlatches no longer exist. At least, amongst the Queen Charlotte's Hidery. This brings me to a third sort of patlatch. When a man or woman wishes to build a house they had to save up enough goods to give away when it was finished. Every part of a house had its name, and a patlatch was given for each part; so much for the posts, the boards and roof, beams, etc., etc. In building a house, the carved column, or as it is better known totem post, — the Hidery name is "gayring" — always received more attention than other parts, because of its connection with the family, social standing and history.

The gayring was prepared in the following order: First, a number of men were sent to the woodlands to choose a good and straight cedar tree, which was felled and stripped of its bark, then smoothed, hollowed out and floated to the village, where the carvers took charge of it.

Their first step was to measure it into divisions of four, five and six fathoms of six feet each, or 24 feet the shortest up to 60 or even more, the longest. A patlatch of ten blankets was given with each fathom; or, at the lowest estimate, a cash value of \$50 for each fathom, or \$250 for a gayring of five fathoms. Connected with house building is the selection of a wife. Before her husband can claim her he has to make a patlatch to the girl's parents of the value of fifty or one hundred dollars, or more, according to agreement.

The next and last sort of patlatch I shall mention is of a different sort, one which was all loss with no profit. As the experience of the writer of the above quoted report and mine are the same, I shall again refer to it. According to Indian ideas, any moral or material harm done to a man can be made good by an adequate patlatch. Thus, if a man is ridiculed by another, he gives away a number of blankets to his friends, and thus regains his former standing. For instance, the grandson of a chief, by unskillful management, upset his little canoe near the shore, to which he had to wade. The grandfather felt ashamed on account of the boy's accident, and gave away a blanket to take away remarks on this subject.

In the same way, a man who feels injured by another will destroy a certain amount of property, then his adversary is compelled to do the same, else a stain of dishonor will rest upon him until he destroys the same amount of property—or, if he refuses to do so, all his lifetime. I have heard of a case in which a man fancied another man had in some way or other injured him; so in order, as he thought, to punish his adversary, he destroyed all the property he could spare. His adversary quickly responded by destroying double the amount, which the other was unable to do, and so the whole village laughed at him.

All of these patlatches, except the first mentioned, have, as far as I know, long been discontinued. That one is still held by sufferance. Several years ago all patlatches were, by act of Parliament, declared illegal, and all who held them were liable to fine and imprisonment. This has been done lately on the Nords, where a chief held a patlatch and where, just now, the Indians threaten to set the law at defiance and hold them. A deputation has been sent by the northern aborigines to Victoria, seeking redress and a refunding of the money unjustly taken from them by an obnoxious law. It has been to the interest of several parties to have these patlatches abolished, and false representations have been made to the Indian Department.

Patlatches are time-honored festivals of our aborigines, and probably existed before the adoption of Christianity.

What right have we Canadians to try and stop those poor people having a reunion occasionally? If the Indians were the ruling power, and said to us you must stop your feasts and holidays or we will imprison you and enact heavy fines, how would we like it? Methinks I hear you all say "Not at all—we have a right to all feasts and holidays as long as we behave ourselves." The aborigines, on the same condition, have the same rights. Parties writing from the north against their continuance, say they knew several people who lost their lives by attending patlatches, by being left alone in the woods. If any did so, they must have been Humatsa, under training, and not at all connected with patlatches.

In conclusion, let me say a patlatch is simply this: A party has a little wealth which he wishes to dispose of to advantage, by not only doubling it, but by getting a new and better name as well as a higher social standing. He invites his friends. When they come he gives all he has to all who choose to accept it, with the understanding, by both giver and receiver, that all has to be returned double as soon as possible.

If any one who had got some of the property given away, died, those who inherited his name and property had to return all according to agreement, or rather social usages of these people.